

Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Draft General Plan

Planning Tomorrow's Great Places

2008



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

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"To enrich lives through effective and caring service."



"To improve the quality of life through innovative and resourceful physical and environmental planning, balancing individual rights and community needs."

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FOREWORD

I. INTRODUCTION

For more than a century, Los Angeles County has been a place where people come to realize the California dream. From the cool breezes along the Pacific Ocean to the hot winds of the Mojave Desert, from the once-volatile banks of the Los Angeles River to the unstable foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, Los Angeles County's varied settings have offered both migrants and natives a wide range of choices about where and how to live. Today, Los Angeles is one of the great metropolises of the world. Over 10 million people live in Los Angeles County, and while 9 million people reside in one of the 88 incorporated cities, another 1 million residents live in the unincorporated communities of the County, making it effectively the third largest city in the state behind Los Angeles and San Diego.

For almost all of those hundred-plus years, the California dream has been realized in Los Angeles County primarily through the creation of new human settlements out of raw land. Whether the dream consisted of a small cottage at the beach or a bungalow in the flats of southern Los Angeles County or a chicken farm in one of the inland valleys, the basis of dream has been the subdivision of land and the creation of thousands of single-family lots to accommodate the cottages and the bungalows and the farms.

Although the chicken farms are mostly gone, agriculture still exists in some northern parts of the county. Many of the bungalows and cottages remain, and often form the basis of thriving neighborhoods – some already outstanding, some on the rebound. And although a fair amount of open land remains, the majority of it is environmentally sensitive – it's steep land, or it's a wetland, or it's an important

wildlife habitat or watershed, or it's scenic or fire-prone, or it's worth preserving because it is the last remaining rural spaces in Los Angeles County.

So the California dream in Los Angeles County looks very different today. The County is a crowded and expensive place, and increasingly one whose fragility has become more obvious with the incidence of wildfires, water shortages, and aging infrastructure. And no longer does the California dream in Los Angeles County revolve around subdividing land. Instead, the 21st Century version revolves around preserving, strengthening, and recognizing that many of those great places are located inside the developed communities the County has already helped to shape.

Los Angeles County's Great Places – An Historical Perspective

The Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission plays a unique and important role in the history of American city planning. Regional planning originated in Los Angeles County in 1922 with the establishment of the Regional Planning Commission, the oldest planning body in the country. For more than 80 years, the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission and the general plans it has produced contained elegant ideas about city planning and helped to shape the unusual and flexible nature of Los Angeles today.

By 1930 Los Angeles had become a decentralized, yet orderly, metropolis – thanks in large part to the efforts of the Regional Planning Commission. Los Angeles County was built on the premise that orderly dispersion of homes and businesses contributes to the efficiency and aesthetics of the modern city. Prior to the adoption of formal comprehensive zoning and development regulations, the piecemeal regulation of tracts for residential development provided

for the proliferation of the suburban ideal. Dispersion of neighborhoods and places of commerce—but within a series of interconnected road and transit ways--was seen as an attractive alternative to the perceived disadvantages of urban life found in the crowded great cities of the East Coast and the Midwest. In fact, one of the Regional Planning Commission's first projects was undertaking plans for the region's first major highways. Routes were chosen based on the principle that city and county roadways should provide for the expansion of suburban development and efficient movement of goods, all with ease of access and proximity to downtown.

Contemporary land use planning in Los Angeles County began in the early 1970s, when the first General Plan was adopted and the Regional Planning Department was first designated as a separate county department. A completely revised County General Plan was adopted in 1980 and it has governed land use in unincorporated Los Angeles County for nearly 30 years.

So in many ways, the County, through its dispersed development model and the manner in which it directed growth, played a key role in shaping the growth pattern that characterizes Los Angeles today. Although many of the resulting communities later incorporated or annexed into existing cities, they were essentially birthed by the L.A. County regional planning effort. Today, dozens of these communities – ranging from Marina del Rey at the Pacific Ocean to the rural subdivisions in the High Desert, from the proud single-family neighborhoods of South Los Angeles to the communities planted in the natural setting of the Santa Monica Mountains – help make up the distinct character that is metropolitan Los Angeles.

Planning Tomorrow's Great Places

For Los Angeles County, planning tomorrow's great places will be a much more complex process than was the case in the days of shaping new neighborhoods and communities from raw land. For this reason, the role of planning in shaping the future of Los Angeles County – and especially the role of the Los Angeles County General Plan – must evolve to meet these changing conditions and circumstances.

The unincorporated County territory that is regulated by the General Plan still covers a vast area – more than 2,600 square miles, an area larger than two states. The County is demographically diverse as well. Many unincorporated

areas in southern Los Angeles County are historically African-American; unincorporated East Los Angeles is mostly Latino; while the unincorporated neighborhoods in the San Gabriel Valley have large Asian populations. And the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County are growing in population faster than the rest of the County, especially the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys. As the municipal government for these unincorporated communities, Los Angeles County is, in essence, the third-largest city in California and the 10th-largest in America, slightly bigger than San Jose or Detroit. These people are also not concentrated in one central location but are scattered in dozens of unincorporated areas throughout the County. Some, especially those in the Santa Monica Mountains and the Antelope Valley, are sparsely populated, while a string of small but well-established urban neighborhoods on the south and east sides of Los Angeles are well-positioned jewels situated in attractive locations along the Blue Line, the Green Line, and the Gold Line.

So the General Plan must address a wide range of issues in a sophisticated way – and do so with an overarching planning theme that addresses the following community-identified goals:

- A strong and diversified economy;
- Fiscal, environmental and social sustainability;
- Revitalization of urban areas and affordable housing;
- Adequate community services and facilities;
- Transportation alternatives and improved air quality;
- Protection from hazards; and,
- A wide variety of environmental and conservation objectives.

These are ambitious goals, and that is why this General Plan is organized around the concept of *sustainability*. Sustainability was originally conceived of as an environmental notion – the idea that we must meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Over time, this idea has been expanded to include other realms of human endeavor as well, including economic sustainability and the concept of sustainable social equity. Obviously, all of these concerns must be addressed in the General Plan. But in a rapidly maturing area such as Los Angeles County, the best way to think about sustainability is in the context of *creating and reinforcing great places*. In other words, creating a sustainable future is

best achieved by pursuing the principles of “smart growth” – preserving the County’s remaining natural and rural areas, protecting and even enhancing its well-established and diverse neighborhoods, landscapes, and its individual and collective range of great places.

To accomplish this, the new General Plan is wide-ranging—dealing not only with land use planning but also with sustainability as well as such topics as infrastructure, public health, environmental protection, energy conservation, and economic development. Obviously, a General Plan that must address all these topics – and do so on a landscape that already contains millions of people and buildings and thousands of miles of roads – must use a vast array policies and land use strategies.

So the County is in a unique position to shape development throughout the region and plan for tomorrow’s great places. The General Plan is the foundation policy document that will help the County achieve this goal – by dealing with a wide range of issues, using a wide range of policy tools, and applying them strategically in a wide range of places.

II. PLANNING AND MAKING TOMORROW’S GREAT PLACES – A JOURNEY THROUGH LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A plan as ambitious as the Los Angeles County General Plan requires an organizing principle such as sustainability, but in a place with the largest and most diverse local government in the nation, there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to growth and development. The goals, policies, strategies, and implementation tools required to bring about tomorrow’s great places must be as varied and diverse as the place itself. Truly understanding the place - and the challenges facing the General Plan – requires a journey through Los Angeles County.

Antelope Valley

The northern part of Los Angeles County, stretching from Santa Clarita all the way north to Tejon Ranch and the Antelope Valley is the fastest-growing part of the County and, in many ways, the one where the County’s approach to planning is most traditional. Large swaths of open land still exist and there is tremendous pressure for development,

especially for residential development. This area is one of the few left in Los Angeles County where it is still possible to build single-family homes in large numbers.

Yet the Antelope Valley is also dotted with a series of small communities that cherish their status as the last places in Los Angeles County where one can live the rural life, farm, or tend to their animals. The small hamlet of Acton is representative of many of the ideals and aspirations of the communities in the Antelope Valley, where urban and suburban-type development is unwanted, and where low-density, open space development is the norm. Acton, like many of the communities in the high desert, clings tightly to its identity and enforces rural standards, such as the Old West Country design standards for the town’s small commercial district, to ward off the sprawl of the booming cities of Lancaster and Palmdale.

So how does the General Plan ensure that places like Acton will remain a great place to live and work in the next 20 years? Through a variety of planning policies and land use strategies that are designed to meet a series of long-range outcomes. For example, the Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) overlay was created to protect the County’s remaining biological and natural resources and covers large swaths of biologically important open space land in the north county. The SEA designation provides a layer of regulatory review as a way to guide development away from these resources and to preserve these valuable lands. Programs and tools such as the SEAs will be invaluable in ensuring that communities like Acton, 20 years from now, will still fulfill the hopes and aspirations of its residents and businesses.

And while the General Plan provides numerous policies and strategies to preserve the desired way of life in the Antelope Valley, an equally important planning tool in achieving this goal will be the County’s efforts at community-based planning. The *Antelope Valley Area Plan* is an area-wide land use plan adopted in 1986 that supplements the General Plan and provides the Antelope Valley with more local level, detailed land use policy direction. More than 20 years later, a new area-wide plan is being written called *Town & Country*. Once completed, *Town & Country* will represent the new vision for the Antelope Valley. It will update the Valley’s land use policies to coincide with the General Plan and provide additional, community-based policies to ensure that the vision for Antelope Valley communities like Acton are realized.

Santa Clarita Valley

State Highway 14 is the only major road available for travelers southwards from the Antelope Valley down to the Santa Clarita Valley. Historically, the Santa Clarita Valley had a lot in common with its neighbors to the north. But the City of Santa Clarita, planned by the County until its incorporation in 1987, is an example of a group of small villages that has become a major residential and commercial center of Los Angeles County.

The villages of the valley that incorporated into the City of Santa Clarita – Newhall, Saugus, Valencia, and Canyon Country -- wanted more local control of their land use decisions. But much of the remaining undeveloped property in the Santa Clarita Valley is located in unincorporated County territory, meaning the Department of Regional Planning still plays a major role in the Valley's development. For this reason, the County must increasingly partner with cities new and old to manage future growth. Perhaps the best example of this trend is the *One Valley, One Vision* joint effort between Los Angeles County and the City of Santa Clarita. "OVOV," as it is typically known, will create a single General Plan for the Santa Clarita Valley that would be incorporated into both the City and County General Plans. OVOV as it is typically known, goes far beyond typical planning efforts and represents a new direction for collaborative, long-range, visionary planning for the County. The *One Valley One Vision Plan* promotes a model Smart Growth land use form and pattern of development that limits and reduces carbon emissions and global warming, improves air quality by linking housing and employment, promotes mixed use and higher density development along transit and transportation corridors, and encourages planned, self-centered, full service village communities that promote walkability and minimize the personal use of automobiles while preserving environmentally sensitive lands.

The villages of the Santa Clarita Valley will further be shaped by General Plan strategies such as the Hillside Management Overlay, which address the development of land that is largely hilly and fire-prone. The Hillside Management Overlay is similar to the SEA in that it provides direction for development proposals that are located on or near steep slopes in order to preserve the county's remaining scenic ridgelines and hillsides. As development continues to creep into the County's remaining natural and hazard areas, plan-

ning tools such as the Hillside Management Overlay will reinforce the need for safe and responsible development that will preserve this valley of villages.

Santa Monica Mountains

Like the Santa Clarita Valley, the Santa Monica Mountains area is a region of rare beauty and environmental sensitivity that the General Plan strives to protect. It is home to a bounty of rich and diverse biological resources including several significant plant communities, habitats, and a variety of wildlife species. As in the Santa Clarita Valley, the General Plan in the Santa Monica Mountains must acknowledge the emergence of new cities in the area and provide ways for the County to work with these cities to manage future growth. Since the last General Plan was adopted in 1980, four cities in the Santa Monica Mountains have been incorporated – Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Westlake Village, and Malibu. But, as in the Santa Clarita Valley, most of the remaining undeveloped property in the Santa Monica Mountains is located in unincorporated County territory, meaning the Los Angeles County General Plan and supplemental land use plans will control most of the new development in these areas.

So fragile and beautiful are the Santa Monica Mountains that the National Park Service and other state agencies have spent billions of dollars purchasing as much land as possible to create a National Recreation Area in close proximity to one of the largest urban areas in the country. The Santa Monica Mountains region also represents some of the most collaborative and effective community-based County planning efforts. The Santa Monica Mountains Coastal Zone Plan implements the provisions and policies of the California Coastal Act, while the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan is a unique cooperative planning effort between local cities, the National Park Service, and area and water districts to protect the mountains' scenic resources and to regulate incompatible development.

The General Plan recognizes the urgent need to reconcile the conflicting demands between the conservation of the diverse and spectacular resources in regions like the Santa Monica Mountains, protecting people from the myriad natural hazards in the County, and the continual urban and suburban expansion of the County's human settlements. Using the inspiration of the renowned writer and regional planner Ian McHarg, whose *Design with Nature* pioneered the idea that land use planning could be combined with

ecological planning, the Department of Regional Planning has created its own valuable planning tool to implement its Smart Growth strategies called the *Environmental Constraints and Development Suitability Map*. The County's land suitability model utilizes an integrated Geographic Information System (GIS) approach to take a quantitative, comprehensive, and multi-criteria approach in evaluating the suitability for future land use development in the County. The development suitability index utilizes a combination of environmental constraints, such as proximity to natural resource and natural hazard areas, as well as development criteria including proximity to public transit, public services, and infrastructure, to help planners, County officials, and residents make informed and efficient land use decisions. In short, the Suitability Map highlights the areas in the County most appropriate for new population, residential, and economic growth while simultaneously preserving the County's open spaces and natural resources.

San Gabriel Valley

At the opposite end of Los Angeles County from the Santa Monica Mountains lies the San Gabriel Valley. Located east of downtown Los Angeles and stretching out to the Riverside and San Bernardino County borders, the San Gabriel Valley presents a unique set of planning challenge for Los Angeles County and its General Plan. First developed with small rural subdivisions in the '20s and '30s, and later with mass-produced housing after World War II, the San Gabriel Valley today is a mostly built-out area where 31 cities are intertwined with dozens of unincorporated communities and "county islands" – small neighborhoods which have never annexed to any city and therefore are still under county jurisdiction.

Yet the San Gabriel Valley today is one of Los Angeles County's most rapidly changing areas. It has undergone huge demographic change in the last 30 years and today is one of the most ethnically and racially diverse areas in Southern California. Once a bedroom suburb, it is now a job center and attracts commuters from as far away as the Inland Empire. Although the San Gabriel Valley is still mostly a low-rise, auto-oriented place, it is increasingly transit-rich, creating new opportunities to shape future development patterns. Metrolink and the El Monte Busway provide unusually good regional transit connections – and if the Gold Line Extension along the 210 Freeway is ever built, these connections will be even better. And the Valley's old

arterial grid system creates unusually good opportunities for bus service and bus rapid transit lines in a region where bus ridership is already surprisingly high.

The unincorporated community of East Pasadena/East San Gabriel in the San Gabriel Valley is the perfect canvas for the County's General Plan to create tomorrow's great places. East Pasadena is a stable community of single-family neighborhoods with multi-family dwellings along major boulevards such as the venerable Huntington Drive, which connects East Pasadena to its posh neighbors of San Marino, Pasadena and Arcadia. Rosemead Boulevard provides a major commercial route through the community and bisects the I-210 only a few short miles from the last Gold Line stop.

Over a period of 20 years, through the vision of the General Plan, East Pasadena can be the place where the County employs a strategic infill and mixed use development plan that will truly transform the community into one of the County's great places. Mixed-use development along Rosemead Boulevard could bring a variety of housing types to the area in proximity to public transit options. A focus on walkability as outlined in the General Plan can create a vibrant, livable streetscape in East Pasadena that will rival that of its neighbors. And as the Gold Line extends down the I-210, a new transit-oriented development district can be built at the 210/Rosemead Boulevard nexus, connecting East Pasadena to the major job centers of the region in Pasadena and downtown Los Angeles.

The County's efforts to plan East Pasadena, Charter Oaks and the numerous other unincorporated islands in the San Gabriel Valley must be a tapestry of efforts that fit both carefully and elegantly into a sub-regional effort in the San Gabriel Valley. For these reasons, the San Gabriel Valley will be an excellent place for the County to again focus on its community-based planning efforts in a region that already has a long history of excellent local plans in two well-established unincorporated communities – Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights. In the future, the General Plan and other community-based plans have an invaluable opportunity to fully integrate the San Gabriel Valley unincorporated islands, both economically and in terms of urban design, into the cities that surround them, even if they are not annexed.

East Los Angeles

East Los Angeles, located between downtown Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley, is one of the oldest, largest, and most important unincorporated communities in Los Angeles County. East Los Angeles has traditionally been – and remains today – the center of Latino life in Los Angeles. It’s an unusually vibrant neighborhood, filled with street life and hidden pockets of prosperity. Yet East Los Angeles will inevitably serve as a focus point for implementation of the Los Angeles County General Plan and will require the use of a wide variety of tools designed to implement transit-oriented development and “smart growth” policies.

The Gold Line Extension from Downtown Los Angeles will open in 2009, creating new development pressures and opportunities in an area that is an extremely attractive location within the region. Tools such as the transit-oriented development ordinance and density bonuses will come into play, and they will have to be combined with efforts in such wide-ranging areas of policy as economic development and pedestrian oriented planning. In many ways, East Los Angeles will be the most important test of the General Plan and its application to urban areas, because implementation of the Plan must retain the special qualities of East Los Angeles while, at the same time, effectively taking advantage of the new development opportunities that are emerging.

An ambitious new planning endeavor in East Los Angeles is to create a Specific Plan for the new transit oriented districts that will come from the extended Gold Line. The East Los Angeles TOD Specific Plan aims to utilize form-based codes to regulate development in these new districts. As such, East Los Angeles represents a community with the opportunity to implement the best pedestrian-oriented policies and strategies of the General Plan. Pedestrian-oriented planning, with its focus on creating and planning for walkable, livable and active communities, achieves a major goal of the General Plan, which is to create great places that are sustainable and improve public health. Improved public health has long been a goal of land-use planning – and creating more opportunities for walking and physical activity can help younger people establish lifetime patterns of fitness that can help prevent – and later, manage – chronic disease such as asthma and diabetes. Good land use planning can also reduce air pollution emissions of all kinds – including

greenhouse gas emissions – in ways that will protect both the environment generally and the health of Los Angeles County’s population specifically.

Embracing smart growth principles in East Los Angeles can create walkable, convenient, attractive, and climate-friendly neighborhoods – enhancing public health while still providing housing, shopping, parks, and other amenities in a manner conducive to modern tastes. A new focus on pedestrian planning calls for the establishment of standards for sidewalks, reducing the challenges for pedestrians in urban, suburban and rural communities. By closing gaps in the existing system through design standards the County is ensuring a comfortable and safe walking environment. For example, limitations on curb cuts reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. Building orientation and setbacks define the space reserved for pedestrians, and transit shelters, street trees, and awnings protect pedestrians from the sometimes harsh climate.

South Los Angeles County

In many ways, South Los Angeles will be the most important laboratory for the implementation of the planning tools contained in the General Plan. But using the plan to strengthen these areas may be more challenging because, at least in the short run, demand for new real estate development may be lighter than in East Los Angeles, the San Gabriel Valley, or the northern county Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley regions..

South Los Angeles contains many historically African-American unincorporated communities, such as Willowbrook, West Athens, and Florence-Firestone, which have had a close attachment to nearby incorporated areas, such as the City of Inglewood and the Watts community, which is located in the City of Los Angeles. In recent years, these communities have undergone many important changes. First, an influx of immigrants from Latin America has altered the ethnic and racial makeup of almost all these communities, making them more multi-ethnic. Second, the Blue Line and the Green Line light-rail lines, which now transect these communities, have created important and exciting new planning opportunities in South Los Angeles.

The Blue Line traverses South Los Angeles on a north-south route, with stops in the heart of Willowbrook and Florence-Firestone, while the Green Line travels east-west

along the Century Freeway (Interstate 105), with stops in Willowbrook, Westmont-West Athens, and Lennox. These communities too will need better local level planning to guide future transitions, and many of the urban planning tools currently in place will have to be revised and improved to be effective. For example, the County has put transit-oriented development ordinances in place for both the Blue Line and Green Line communities, complete with provisions permitting mixed-use developments, but so far these ordinances have not been heavily used by developers. This lack of interest is partly a function of the private real estate market, but it also shows that the County must be vigilant in revisiting and upgrading the actual implementation tools, so that the General Plan's vision and the potential of these communities can be realized over time.

Florence-Firestone is representative of a lot of South Los Angeles communities in that it has a colorful history of prosperity followed by decline and neglect. Like most of the communities in South L.A., Florence-Firestone has far more to it than the crime-ridden representatives typically portrayed in popular culture. It has stable middle-class African American neighborhoods, new Latino marketplaces, and great opportunity for investment that will help all ethnicities.

As the County begins to focus on strengthening existing communities such as Florence-Firestone, economic development becomes more important – and it becomes essential to link land use changes with economic development. The economies of the communities in Los Angeles County vary widely, and this is especially true in the existing communities of South Los Angeles and East Los Angeles, many of which have struggled with prosperity for so long and cannot count merely on additional real estate development to bring lasting economic success.

In devising this General Plan, the County has worked with the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission (CDC), the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), and other public and private stakeholders to develop economic development goals and meld land use strategies to obtain them, including the following:

- Balance the needs of the entertainment industry and the local communities where its activities reside;

- Promote planning processes and development regulations that enhance the competitive edge of the County businesses;
- Update aging infrastructure to support the functioning of world-class Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, along with LAX;
- Pursue strategies that attract the green sector and other target industries; and,
- Protect jobs-rich, economically viable industrial lands from incompatible development.

The General Plan's Economic Development Element calls for the provision of the physical and land use needs to accommodate the County's economies of the future in a sustainable manner, particularly by promoting a strong and diversified economy. The revitalization and redevelopment of existing communities like Florence-Firestone and Willowbrook cannot be done through zoning alone, but land use policies can be coupled with economic development efforts to promote prosperity. And it is especially important for such prosperity to be sustainable in nature.

That's why the General Plan places so much emphasis on green technology as a primary vehicle for economic growth. Similarly, green industries that can support the local employment base while conducting profitable and environmentally sustainable business practices are the future of the County's economy. Communities such as Florence-Firestone, which have traditionally been a center of such businesses as scrap metal, can emerge as leaders in the world of green jobs and green businesses.

III. PLANNING GREEN COMMUNITIES

Through our journey of the County, it is easy to see that the unincorporated communities are full of wonderful and diverse neighborhoods and each have their own set of planning challenges and opportunities. Importantly, none of the County's great places can be truly great in the future without being environmentally sustainable in all ways. That means that places must be constructed and maintained with sustainable materials. It means they have to reduce, rather than increase, our carbon footprint. And it means they have to be able to withstand, minimize, or, preferably, avoid, the fires, floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters to which Southern California is so prone.

The new Los Angeles County General Plan addresses all of these aspects of making great places sustainable – and does so in a comprehensive way that addresses all aspects of County operations. Not only does the County manage the day-to-day operations of vital services for its residents, such as healthcare, public protection, and waste management, but it is also the largest employer in the 5-county region with over 100,000 employees. The County, then, has the opportunity to serve as a role model for other governments and employers in the region who are considering adopting sustainable business and land use practices.

An illustration of this leadership role can be seen in the joint effort between the Department of Regional Planning and the Department of Public Works to create, adopt, and implement the County’s Green Building Program. This program includes plans to implement development concepts such as Low Impact Development (LID), regulations that promote the use of natural lighting and improved indoor air quality, and requirements for drought-tolerant landscaping - concepts that are not only better for the environment, but also promote public health and employee productivity. The “green” ordinances being drafted by the County, which will play a large part in implementing many of the sustainable goals and policies that shape the General Plan, will make the County more energy and water-efficient, and ultimately will reduce its carbon footprint.

Sustainable communities must also be safe, and the County’s communities, especially on the suburban fringe and in rural areas, are especially vulnerable to natural hazards. So the General Plan must provide the foundation to make them more sustainable over time in the face of a hazard-prone environment and especially what biologists call a “fire-driven ecology”. In this regard, the new General Plan builds on existing policies and practices that are already strong. In the disastrous fires of recent years, many recent Los Angeles County subdivisions have received considerable publicity and attention for their ability to withstand and repel fires. However, maintaining that reputation relies on minimizing impacts on existing infrastructure.

Sustainable communities must also be able to house all of its residents regardless of their income level, race, or ethnicity. However, the recent housing bubble has been anything but sustainable. It is almost impossible to provide adequate housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, especially for seniors, persons with disabilities,

single parent households, the homeless, and farmworkers has become increasingly difficult if not impossible. The Housing Element of the General Plan has the stated goal of planning for a wide range of housing types in sufficient supply to meet the needs of current and future residents. The following specific land use policies communicate how the County is proposing to create a sustainable housing supply and meet the growing housing needs of existing and future residents:

- Encourage mixed use residential and commercial developments along major transportation and commercial corridors.
- Support the development of affordable housing near employment opportunities and or within a reasonable distance of public transportation.
- Promote mixed income neighborhoods and a diversity of housing types throughout the unincorporated County to increase housing choices for all economic segments of the population
- Incorporate advances in energy-saving technologies into housing design, construction, operation, and maintenance.

Innovative mapping techniques are also important tools in creating a sustainable county. Los Angeles County has a long history of using environmental data as development guidance tools, and this is continuing on an unprecedented basis in the General Plan. In fact, the Department of Regional Planning’s early planners undertook an in-depth analysis of the County’s to determine land that was most suitable for development using aerial photography and other technology coming on line at that time. Some 75 years ago, the Regional Planning Commission also conducted an inventory and mapping of more than 450 square miles, identifying each land use that made up the urban fabric.

Today’s Regional Planning Department continues this tradition with modern-day mapping technology in a fashion analogous to that used by the original planners for Los Angeles aided by greater data precision in inventorying resources. Maps and diagrams in “Planning Tomorrow’s Great Places” reflect the same principles that ecologists employ in studying natural and human activity, building on existing environmental policies and spatially depicting the diverse geography of the County. Specific environmental policies are combined with site and regional characteristics in order to direct development away from environmentally

sensitive areas, those least suitable to human habitation or most costly to develop, such as seismic zones, hillsides and fire prone areas. The tradeoffs between Social needs such as public safety and affordable housing and environmental resources at the regional level are made clear. In this way – and many others – the General Plan’s many powerful tools are brought to bear to create not only great green places, but great sustainable places as well.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is perhaps no local jurisdiction in the country that has such a long and storied history of planning – especially regional planning – as Los Angeles County does. Los Angeles is often viewed by outsiders as unplanned and sprawling. But as the history of the Regional Planning Commission suggests, the opposite is actually true. Los Angeles may be auto-oriented and decentralized, but it was planned that way, with residential neighborhoods built in close proximity to industrial and job centers and to small retail downtowns as well.

If Los Angeles County’s past planning efforts helped create its decentralized development pattern – appropriate for the 20th Century - then the County’s future planning efforts must reinforce and strengthen that pattern in a way that will work in the 21st Century. To truly plan and to make tomorrow’s great places actually happen, existing communities must be the focal point of future efforts. In some communities in the South and East County, this will require increasing permissible densities to take advantage of emerging transit opportunities; and it will also require combining land use planning and economic development efforts to stimulate needed improvements in these neighborhoods. In the northern part of the County, natural assets must be protected and, in so doing, the interconnected system of human settlements and natural areas must be strengthened together, and in places like the Santa Monica Mountains and the Antelope Valley, this will require the increased use of strong environmental policies in the General Plan. Economic, environmental, and human health concerns must be central to the effort to plan tomorrow’s great places. The County must be able to recognize and deal with the great diversity of places under its jurisdiction – and their relationship to great places already located in adjacent cities.

All these things the new General Plan does. But it is important to remember that the plan is not an end in itself. Ultimately, the purpose of a plan is to guide to creation of places. And so the ultimate measure of the Los Angeles County General Plan’s success will not be the policies and actions contained within it; but, rather, the quality of the great places – urban, suburban, rural, natural – that emerge throughout the County over the next 20 years.



Bill Fulton

Publisher

California Planning & Development Report

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT IS THE GENERAL PLAN?

The Los Angeles County General Plan is the guide for growth and development in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. California law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan “for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning” (Government Code Section 65300). The General Plan is designed to guide the long-term physical development and conservation of the County’s land and environment through a framework of goals, policies, and implementation programs. The General Plan also provides a foundation for more detailed plans and implementation programs to be conducted, such as area or community plans, zoning ordinances, and specific plans.

Los Angeles County continues to grow at a tremendous pace. Careful planning and stewardship by County officials is needed to maintain the physical and natural amenities that make Los Angeles County a desirable place to live. Long-range planning also allows the County to responsibly manage future development, which is necessitated by continued population and economic growth. The General Plan is the County’s blueprint for guiding decision-making and meeting these diverse and contrasting needs.

General Plan Defining Qualities

The Los Angeles County General Plan adheres to the following qualities as established by the State Office of Planning and Research guidelines:



View the General Plan Document online at:
<http://planning.lacounty.gov/generalplan>

General in Nature

The General Plan reflects goals that are general in nature and can apply to all areas of the unincorporated County. Simultaneously, the General Plan allows the policy needs of the diverse communities in the County to be addressed through community plans, area plans, specific plans, policy initiatives, and regulatory implementation mechanisms.

Comprehensive in Scope

The General Plan addresses all aspects of physical development in the County, including land use development and growth, the provision of community services and affordable housing, and economic development activities that will sustain and promote the quality of life in the County.

Consistency

The General Plan is a balanced and consistent document. Goals and policies within the General Plan have been developed to eliminate conflicts between one another (internal consistency) or with other agencies’ plans in the County.

Short-term Policies Supporting Long-term Goals

The General Plan establishes a long-term blueprint for the County utilizing the most current information on the state of the County’s land use, economic, and social conditions. It is a forward-thinking document that uses shorter-term policies and implementation measures to strategically reach long-term goals.

General Plan Guiding Principles

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (DRP) has spent years gathering data and meeting with residents, business people, and County employees to assemble information to shape the General Plan. From this process, a progressive list of Guiding Principles was

“The enormous increase in scale of the metropolitan region today requires an entirely new scale of image if the region is to hold together as an entity

–Edmund Bacon

developed to direct the creation of the General Plan. These Guiding Principles helped shape the General Plan’s goals, policies, and implementation programs.

The Guiding Principles for the General Plan are:

- **Dynamic:** The General Plan is designed to be a visually engaging and exciting document that examines the existing social, physical, and economic conditions in the County and provides a forward-looking plan for the future.
- **Flexible:** The General Plan is adaptable to the fast-changing social, physical and economic environments of the County. To ensure continued relevance, the General Plan goals and policies will be re-evaluated every five (5) years or sooner if needed. Between these milestone updates, the General Plan will be amended as necessary (a maximum of four times per year in accordance with State law) to conform to changing laws, requirements, and the diverse needs of our communities.
- **Accountable:** The General Plan’s goals and policies are clearly articulated and formatted in order to facilitate an accountable General Plan that can be easily measured and evaluated.
- **Inspirational:** The General Plan is presented in a way that is intended to inspire and raise the aspirations of all residents, the business community, and County agencies to make the County an even better place to live and work.

- **Informative:** The General Plan is an educational, data-driven document designed to inform and enlighten the community about existing conditions and future possibilities for change.
- **Progressive:** The General Plan is a future-oriented, forward-thinking document, incorporating the newest and best practices related to technology, innovative development practices, energy conservation, environmental stewardship, and economic sustainability.

History of the Los Angeles County General Plan

The first attempts at formalizing a development plan for the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County began in 1970 with the creation of the Environmental Development Guide. Three years later in 1973, County officials adopted the first General Plan for Los Angeles County, and in 1980, the General Plan was revised and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors.

Since that time, the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County have undergone a variety of physical, demographic, and economic changes that present planners and County officials with a unique set of challenges and opportunities. The General Plan sets goals and policies that are designed to address immediate issues and concerns while maintaining an awareness of the long-term implications and consequences of these proposed actions. The General Plan incorporates an analysis of the current conditions in the



Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 2008



Public Participation

County and provides planning policies that will affect long-term planning decisions. Although the General Plan envisions goals and policies with a 20-year horizon, the Department of Regional Planning will update the General Plan on a continual basis to reflect the dynamic nature of the ongoing development in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

Public Participation

Community participation was critical in the development of the General Plan. The Department of Regional Planning conducted an extensive series of community workshops and environmental impact report (EIR) scoping meetings throughout the County to engage residents in the process of shaping the General Plan. Residents and planners worked together to collaboratively develop ideas for the goals and policies of the General Plan. The result of these visioning workshops was a draft of the General Plan goals and policies called *Shaping the Future 2025*, which was released for public review in 2004.

Further input for the development of the General Plan continued through 2004 to 2006 with a series of workshops and inter-departmental presentations. In the summer of 2007, the Draft Preliminary General Plan was released for public review and staff again conducted public outreach meetings to garner input into the planning process. Throughout the entire development process, the Department of Regional Planning kept community stakeholders apprised of the

status of the General Plan through the Department's General Plan Update Program website, as well as through meetings and presentations, as requested.

II. GENERAL PLAN FORMAT

The California Government Code Section 65302 requires that all general plans contain and address seven elements: land use, transportation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The Government Code also provides flexibility in the format and allows jurisdictions to combine elements or to cover new topics. The Los Angeles County General Plan contains all seven required elements, with the Conservation and Open Space elements being combined. The Housing Element is being updated as a separate document. The Los Angeles County General Plan also provides three additional Elements: Air Resources, Public Services and Facilities, and Economic Development. The General Plan is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction
- **Chapter 2:** Background
- **Chapter 3:** Land Use Element
- **Chapter 4:** Mobility Element
- **Chapter 5:** Air Resources Element
- **Chapter 6:** Conservation and Open Space Element
- **Chapter 7:** Noise Element
- **Chapter 8:** Safety Element
- **Chapter 9:** Public Services and Facilities Element
- **Chapter 10:** Economic Development Element

The following five companion documents comprise the Los Angeles County General Plan:

- **General Plan:** Contains a background discussion that frames how the General Plan was created, and the goals, policies, and implementation programs for each of the Elements.
- **Appendix I:** Area and Community Plan Land Use Policy Maps.
- **Appendix II:** Land Use Plan Maps for Unincorporated Areas without a Local Plan.
- **Technical Appendix:** Contains information and studies that were generated in creating the General Plan.



Downtown Los Angeles - Source: Pictometry International Corp

- **Environmental Impact Report (EIR):** Meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors use the EIR to understand the potential environmental implications associated with implementation of the General Plan.

III. THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The Department of Regional Planning provides long-range planning that guides land use decisions and development patterns in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The General Plan is the primary document that the Department utilizes in making land use and service development recommendations. In addition, the General Plan is a tool that facilitates inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration to meet agreed upon countywide land use and service-related goals. It provides valuable information to regional agencies, incorporated cities, and individual communities in unincorporated areas on the development patterns in the County for the next 20 years so that they can plan their service needs accordingly and effectively.

Regional Agencies

In Los Angeles County, special district agencies and regional agencies make many decisions related to the provision and maintenance of public services. For example, the County has numerous water districts, school districts, and sanitation

district providers. All regional agencies with jurisdictional activities in the County are responsible for coordinating with the County government on policies and programs that affect the region, as their policies often affect the County's urban and rural form of development. As such, the General Plan is a vehicle for providing general policy guidance to all of the agencies, districts, and governments that operate within the County's sphere of influence. Examples of the major regional agencies the County works with include the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and the Metropolitan Water District (MWD).

Incorporated Cities

There are 88 cities in Los Angeles County, all of which have their own General Plans that govern their individual jurisdictions. While the Department of Regional Planning is responsible for the land use planning in unincorporated areas of the County, many other County agencies provide services to the unincorporated areas and many or all of the 88 incorporated cities. The General Plan primarily focuses on the unincorporated areas, which comprise nearly 65% of the 4,083 square miles of Los Angeles County. However, the General Plan does address regional issues that are countywide as appropriate, such as flood management or

SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) is a holistic, strategic plan for defining and addressing Southern California's inter-related housing, traffic, water, air quality, and other regional challenges. In developing the RCP, SCAG relied on a set of Guiding Principles for sustaining a livable future that closely matched goals of the County's General Plan, such as:

- Improve mobility for all residents;
- Foster livability in all communities;
- Enable prosperity for all people; and,
- Promote sustainability for future generations.



Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach

fire hazards. The responsibilities and focus of countywide issues versus those specific to the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County are clearly identified throughout the General Plan.

Unincorporated Communities

The General Plan Elements are structured to address issues that transcend local community interests and are of countywide importance. However, in California, more local-level planning is carried out through area and community plans. Community plans are a part of the General Plan but focus on a particular region or community within unincorporated Los Angeles County. A community plan is adopted by resolution as an amendment to the General Plan (in the manner set out in §65350, et seq). It refines the policies of the General Plan as they apply to a smaller geographic area and is implemented by ordinances and other discretionary actions, such as zoning. A community plan must be internally consistent with the General Plan of which it is a part, meaning all principles, goals, objectives, policies, and plan proposals set forth in an area or community plan must work within the overall context and framework of the General Plan. Each community plan need not address all of the issues required by the General Plan when the overall General Plan satisfies these requirements. However, a community plan may provide greater detail for policies affecting development in a defined area. The various types of community level planning are more fully addressed in the Land Use Element.

IV. COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The goals and policies of the General Plan reflect the broadly expressed needs, concerns, and aspirations of County residents. Community participation and citizen feedback have been crucial components in the creation of the General Plan. Through public outreach activities, County residents identified the following ten (10) issues they felt were important topics to be addressed in the General Plan:

Promote a Strong and Diversified Economy

- Provide a wide range of investment opportunities and job choices so that the County is less vulnerable to the harmful consequences of recessions.
- Provide an adequate supply of land suitable for industry and commerce to ensure a diversified and strong economy.
- Increase workforce training efforts to better prepare the job force for the careers of the future.

Promote Fiscal, Environmental, Social and Logistical Sustainability

- Meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- Encourage practices that maximize user benefit, minimize waste and redundancy, and consistently promote the revitalization, restoration, and enhancement of the built, natural, and social environments.



Urban Infill Development and Affordable Housing

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- Promote the conservation of energy and other valuable natural resources as a basic principle in all planning activities.

Promote Revitalization of Urban Areas

- Direct development opportunities to areas most in need of economic investment.
- Emphasize code enforcement as a means to spur urban redevelopment in economically depressed urban areas.

Provide Affordable Housing

- Build and maintain a diversity of decent housing at an affordable price.

Provide for Adequate Community Services and Facilities

- Maintain roadways and regulate land uses.
- Provide community services and facilities like schools, parks, and libraries that play a significant role in the enrichment of the public consciousness.
- Develop a sense of place for the many neighborhoods within the County.
- Ensure proficient emergency service and infrastructure coverage, like sewer and wastewater systems, that are necessary for the health and safety of residents and visitors.
- Increase community services like daycare and job training centers.

Promote Multimodal Transportation Alternatives and an Efficient Transportation System

- Maintain and maximize the efficiency of the County highway and road network system by integrating and promoting alternative forms of transportation such as rail, bus, and biking.
- Improve the freight and highway system for the safe and efficient movement of goods.

Improve Air Quality

- Address the regional issue of air quality, which is important in maintaining a high quality of life for County residents.

Conserve Water and Protect its Quality

- Develop and promote strong conservation efforts and preserve land for the natural recharge of groundwater, which is essential to ensure an ongoing adequate supply of quality water to the County.

- Promote the development of a countywide recycled water system.

Protect the Natural Environment, Natural Resources, and Conserve Open Space

- Maintain and protect natural resources, such as clean air and water, wildlife habitat areas, mineral resource areas, agricultural land, national forest land, parks and open space areas, and recreational areas.
- Preserve open space areas that provide valuable recreational, scenic and biological resources for County residents.
- Acquire open space and limit development in rural areas.

Protect Against Natural and Manmade Hazards

- Create programs to provide current and improved hazard-related information, and strengthen development review procedures and standards.



Vasquez Rocks, Open Space



Metro Rail Gold Line

V. IMPLEMENTING THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is primarily designed to assist decision-makers and the general public with land use planning and infrastructure/service management. It also provides guidance for policy and program development throughout the County, which is planned for and implemented by a variety of departments, agencies, commissions, and community groups. The General Plan also puts forth several strategies and action items for the implementation of its goals and policies.

While the General Plan was written by the Department of Regional Planning, the implementation of the Plan is the responsibility of the entire County, its many departments, and its agencies. In Los Angeles County, the General Plan is especially useful to the Board of Supervisors and the Regional Planning Commission, both of whom are charged with implementing this adopted policy document.

While writing the General Plan's Implementation Actions, County staff consulted with various County agencies to produce implementation measures that maximize collaboration

and facilitate short-term, strategic actions to help realize the long-range intent of the General Plan. The implementation actions are listed after their relevant set of goals and policies in the last section of each Element. A comprehensive list and timeline of all General Plan implementation action can be found in Appendix I.

VI. LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN: PLANNING TOMORROW'S GREAT PLACES

The updated Los Angeles County General Plan arrives at an opportune time. The landscape for how planning and development activities take place in the County is undergoing profound changes. Extreme environmental conditions, such as water shortages and wildfires, require that County officials develop and build in ways that differ from past practices, promote environmental sustainability, and maximize public safety. The high cost of housing and development, and the absence of available land have also affected planning practices in the County, as mixed use development, infill development and transit corridor planning replace sprawling growth patterns.

Sustainability

The primary theme of the County General Plan, and the ultimate goal of all of its policy actions, is to achieve sustainability. Sustainability is a simple concept that involves the utilization of planning practices that ensure people's needs



Downtown Los Angeles

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Renewable Energy and Conservation

in the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their economic, social, and environmental needs. The County is committed to utilizing and promoting land use policies that achieve sustainability, and to implementing practices that promote healthy, livable, and sustainable communities.

The General Plan addresses sustainability on a regional level by increasing its attention to environmental protection and by making long-range changes to the regulations that govern planning and development activities. For example, the Department of Regional Planning is working closely with staff from the Department of Public Works to implement operational practices to the County Code that require low-impact development standards that manage stormwater runoff, and building code changes that use green-building techniques to conserve water and energy.

Furthermore, the General Plan also promotes sustainability at the community and neighborhood level. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development Rating System was created by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to develop a national set of standards for neighborhood development and design that is based on smart growth principles, environmental sustainability, and the building of healthy and livable communities. These standards were created to accomplish a set of goals that are similar to those in the County's General Plan: revitalize urban areas, reduce land consumption,

reduce automobile dependence, promote pedestrian safety and accessibility, improve air quality, decrease stormwater runoff, and build more livable, sustainable communities for people of all income levels. Adhering to these standards, the Los Angeles County General Plan provides policies to achieve all of these goals and meet the sustainability benchmarks as outlined by the LEED Neighborhood Development Rating System.

The County recognizes that achieving countywide sustainability will involve shifts in policy that will be initiated and implemented over many years. The Los Angeles County General Plan will also be just one instrument in the County's endeavors to achieve sustainability. But as the guiding policy document for land use in the County, the Los Angeles County General Plan: *Planning Tomorrow's Great Places* will lead the way for the sustainable planning and development actions of the future.



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Chapter 2

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BACKGROUND

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Background Chapter is to describe the natural, rural, and urban characteristics of unincorporated Los Angeles County. Following this description is a summary of the County’s current demographic data, which looks at statistics and projections related to population, housing, and employment. From this data, the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) formulated a broad list of planning assumptions that were used to shape the goals, policies, and implementation programs for the General Plan.

II. LOCATION AND COUNTY DESCRIPTION

Los Angeles County is geographically one of the largest counties in the nation with approximately 4,083 square miles. The County stretches along 75 miles of the Pacific Coast of Southern California, and is bordered to the east by Orange and San Bernardino Counties, to the north by Kern County, and to the west by Ventura County. Los Angeles County also includes the offshore islands of Santa Catalina and San Clemente. **Figure 2.1** shows the regional location of Los Angeles County.

The County Setting

The unincorporated areas account for approximately 65% of the total Los Angeles County land area, as seen in **Table 2.1**.

The unincorporated areas of the County cover a large geographic area and are ecologically and climatically diverse. A truly unique aspect of planning in the County is the non-contiguous nature of the County’s jurisdiction. The unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County consist of 124 separate, non-contiguous land areas. The unincorporated areas in the northern part of the County are covered by large amounts of sparsely populated land and include the Angeles National Forest, a portion of the Los Padres National Forest, and the Mojave Desert. The unincorporated areas in the southern part of the County consist of 58 pockets of unconnected communities, often referred to as the County’s unincorporated “urban islands”.

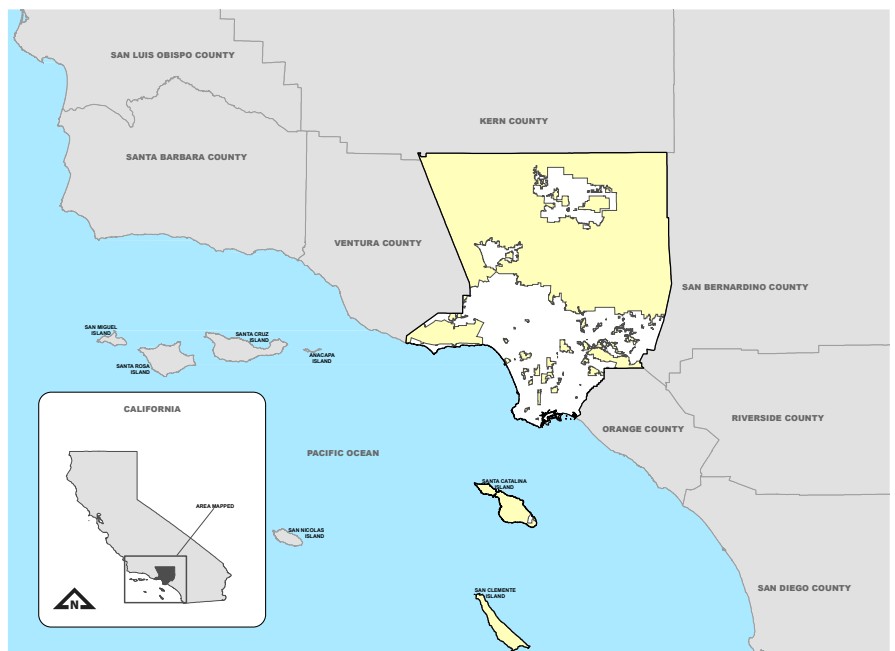


Figure 2.1: Regional Location of L.A. County

Table 2.1: L.A. County Distribution of Land Area

County Land Components	Cities (sq. miles)	Unincorporated (sq. miles)	Total (sq. miles)
Mainland	1,423.7	2,528.3	3,952.0
San Clemente Island	0.0	56.4	56.4
Santa Catalina Island	2.9	71.9	74.8
Total	1,426.6	2,656.6	4,083.2

Source: Los Angeles County Department of Public Works

Los Angeles County is divided into five (5) supervisorial districts. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, created by the state Legislature in 1852, is the governing body for the County. Five supervisors are elected to four-year terms by voters within their respective districts. The Board has executive, legislative, and quasi-judicial roles. It appoints all department heads other than the assessor, district attorney, and sheriff, which are also elected positions.

Figure 2.2 displays the unincorporated areas of the County, and Figure 2.3 depicts the County's five (5) Supervisorial Districts.

Defining Characteristics

The following discussion categorizes the unincorporated areas of the County by defining characteristics and/or natural elements. There is a high level of diversity among the communities and their natural features within each geographic area of the County. The purpose of these descriptions is to familiarize readers with the diversity of the various communities under the County's jurisdiction.

Northern Los Angeles County

The northern part of the County contains the largest amount of unincorporated County land, and is generally defined as the land between the Ventura and San Bernardino County lines, and from the Kern County line in the north stretching southward to the San Gabriel Mountains. This area includes large sections of the Mojave Desert, the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, and contains most of the remaining agricultural land in Los Angeles County. Additionally, Edwards Air Force Base, which straddles the Los Angeles County and Kern County border, consists of 79,000 acres of land along the north County border.

This area has seen the most growth and annexation over the last 20 years, such as the incorporation of the City of Santa Clarita and the expansion of the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster. Despite the rural nature of the area, significant urbanization can be seen in the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys. There are four (4) major new planned communities under development in this area: Northlake, Fair Oaks Ranch, Newhall Ranch, and Centennial. The key planning issues in these areas include the loss of open space to development, strains on over-extended public services, and the environmental impacts related to long commuting patterns to and from the Los Angeles basin.

Western Los Angeles County

The western and coastal parts of unincorporated Los Angeles County include the Santa Monica Mountains Region and the offshore coastal zones that stretch along the Pacific Ocean. This area contains some of the most scenic parts of the County, including the Santa Monica Mountain National

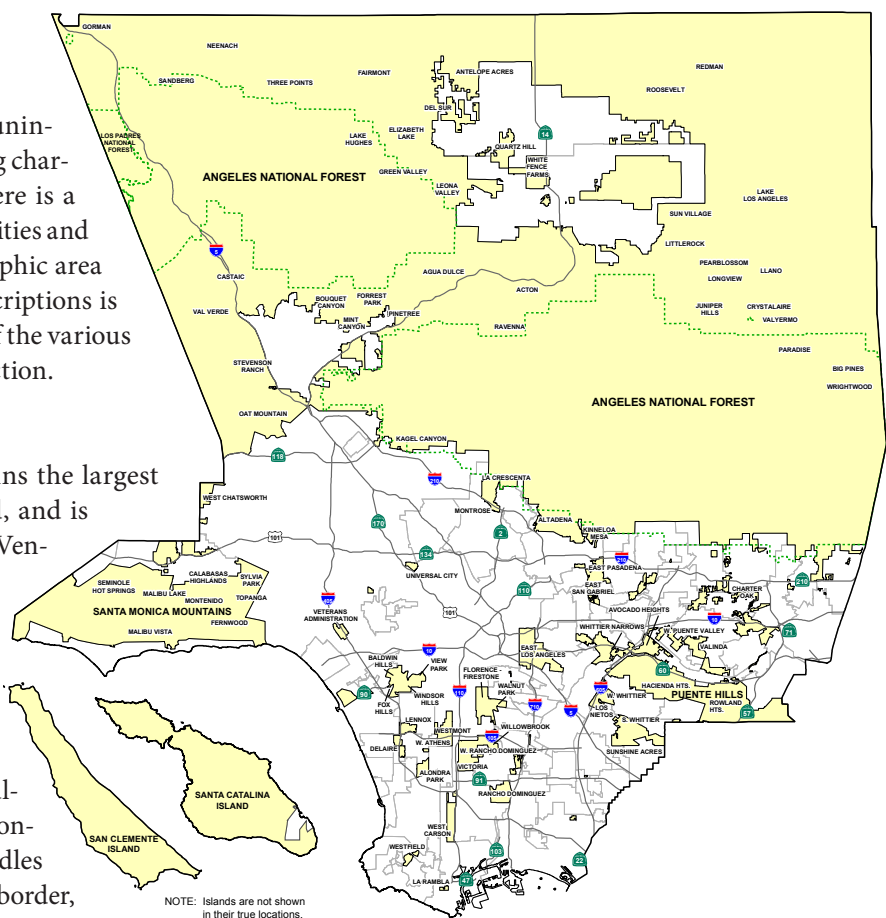


Figure 2.2: Unincorporated Areas of L.A. County

Recreation Area. Because of its natural amenities and proximity to urban areas, development in this area is often seen as controversial. The unincorporated areas include land that is preserved for open space and regional parks, small rural communities, and growing communities such as Las Virgenes. Santa Catalina Island, which outside of the City of Avalon is managed almost entirely by the Catalina Island Conservancy, and San Clemente Island, which is wholly owned and operated by the U.S. Navy, are located in the County's two offshore coastal zones.

There are also a handful of diverse unincorporated pockets located south of the Santa Monica Mountains that are very distinct from other County areas. These pockets include Marina del Rey, a highly developed coastal community south of the City of Santa Monica, the Ladera Heights/Baldwin Hills, Lennox, Del Aire and Alondra Park neighborhoods, and the large Veterans Administration complex that straddles I-405 near Westwood. The Baldwin Hills, with the Kenneth B. Hahn State Park, and the marina facilities at Marina del Rey provide many recreational opportunities for area residents.

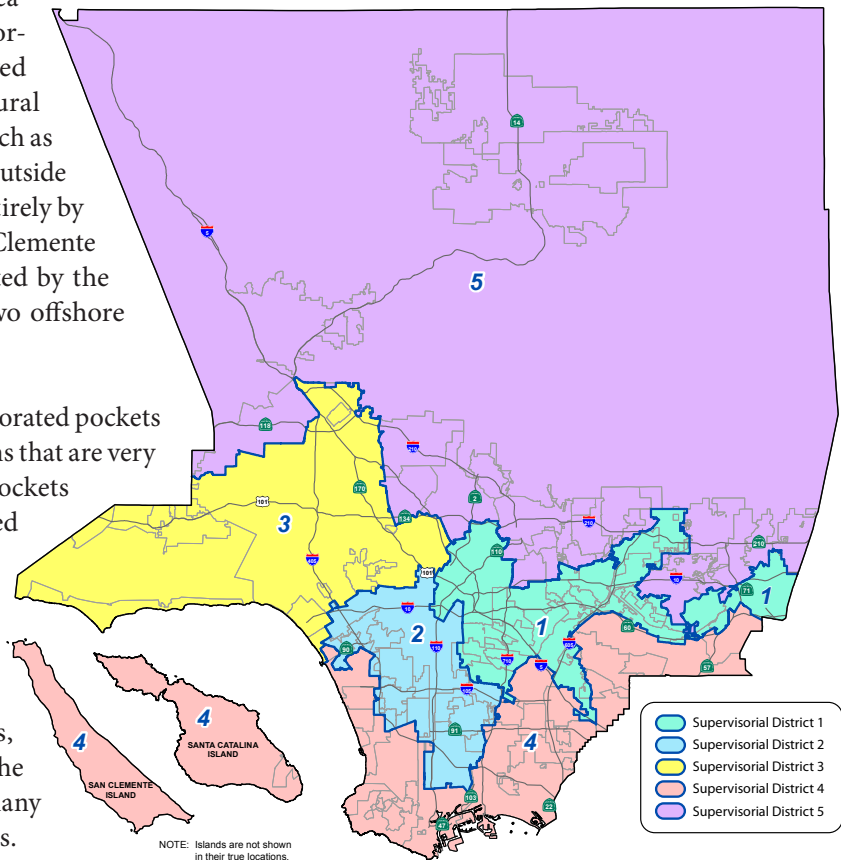


Figure 2.3: L.A. County Supervisorial Districts

Southern Los Angeles County

The southern part of the County includes Los Angeles basin communities that are highly urbanized, very dense, and are generally characterized by challenging physical and economic conditions. These urban pockets include the communities of Florence-Firestone, Willowbrook, West Rancho Dominguez, Westmont, West Athens, East Compton and West Carson. There are very few natural areas and open spaces in the southern basin, and these communities have disproportionate amounts of industrial land uses. The principal planning concerns in this area are the incompatibility of industrial and residential land uses, the need to attract new investment, businesses and jobs, and basic services and infrastructure, such as grocery stores.

East Los Angeles County

There are a few urban pockets adjacent to the Gateway Cities that line the eastern border of the City of Los Angeles. This area, which includes the West Whittier community, is urban and largely residential. The critical challenges facing these communities are their aging housing stock and lack of economic investment.

The eastern parts of the County are comprised of East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley communities. East Los Angeles is located just east of downtown Los Angeles. It is home to a diverse mix of residential and commercial uses and is an older, denser, and more established community compared with other unincorporated areas. This area is heavily influenced by the majority Hispanic community, and its connections to the economy of the City of Los Angeles. The expansion of the Metro Gold Line into East Los Angeles presents the community with many development and planning opportunities, such as transit-oriented development.



All General Plan Figures Can Be Found on the
DRP Website at planning.lacounty.gov/maps

Table 2.2: L.A. County Population Estimates, 2000-2006.

County	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Unincorporated	986,050	1,004,301	1,026,047	1,045,549	1,063,148	1,079,245	1,092,908
Incorporated	8,533,280	8,658,942	8,803,068	8,933,923	9,025,786	9,087,172	9,152,664
Total	9,519,330	9,663,243	9,829,115	9,979,472	10,088,934	10,166,417	10,245,572

Source: State of California, Department of Finance, E-4 Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, 2001-2006, with 2000 Benchmark. Sacramento, California, May 2006.

San Gabriel Valley

There are several pockets of unincorporated communities that line the San Gabriel Valley, south of the San Gabriel Mountains and north of the Puente Hills. Like East Los Angeles, many of the communities in this area are older, denser and more established than their northern counterparts and they are culturally influenced by their large Hispanic and Asian populations. The San Gabriel Valley communities are widely diverse in terms of housing stock, development patterns, and the amount of industry in each community. Some areas in the eastern part of the County, like Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights, are newer bedroom communities that line the scenic Puente Hills, while other areas are characterized by a much older housing stock or are primarily industrial. Following the North County, the San Gabriel Valley is experiencing the most rapid growth in the County.



Cultural Diversity Mural

Table 2.3: Percent Change in Population for L.A. County, 2000-2006.

Year	Unincorporated Population	Percent Change	Total County Population	Percent Change
2000	986,050	-	9,519,330	-
2001	1,004,301	1.85	9,663,243	1.51
2002	1,026,047	2.17	9,829,115	1.72
2003	1,045,549	1.90	9,979,472	1.53
2004	1,063,148	1.68	10,088,934	1.10
2005	1,079,245	1.51	10,166,417	0.77
2006	1,092,908	1.27	10,245,572	0.78

Source: State of California, Department of Finance, E-4 Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, 2001-2006, with 2000 Benchmark. Sacramento, California, May 2006.

III. DEMOGRAPHICS

This section of the General Plan documents the current demographic and economic conditions in unincorporated Los Angeles County. This data was used to identify important demographic and social trends that helped shape the goals and policies of the General Plan. The demographics section utilizes statistics from the Demographic Research Unit of the California Department of Finance, which is designated as the single official source of demographic data for state planning and budgeting. Additional data are provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Current Population Estimates

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 show the population estimates for Los Angeles County, and the percent change in population for the years 2000-2006. Both the unincorporated areas and the County as a whole have experienced steady population growth. However, as seen in Table 2.3, the percentage of change in population over the last six years has been higher in the unincorporated areas when compared to the County at large.

Table 2.4: Population by County for SCAG Region, 1990-2000.

County	1990 Population	2000 Population	Percent Increase
Los Angeles	8,863,164	9,519,338	+ 07.4%
Orange	2,410,556	2,846,289	+ 18.1%
San Bernardino	1,418,380	1,709,434	+ 20.5%
Riverside	1,170,413	1,545,387	+ 32.0%
Ventura	669,016	753,197	+ 12.6%
Imperial	109,303	142,361	+ 30.2%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Table 2.5: Racial/Ethnic Composition of Unincorporated L.A. County, 2000.

Race / Ethnicity	Population	Percent
Hispanic	525,903	53.3%
White	239,580	24.3%
African American	103,504	10.5%
Asian	95,814	9.7%
Native American	2,714	0.3%
Native Hawaiian	1,802	0.2%
Other	1,617	0.2%
Two or More Races	16,603	1.7%
Total	987,537	100%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Regional Context

For a broader perspective, a review of regional population data is informative. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a regional planning agency for the six-county Southern California area, which includes Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Imperial, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. **Table 2.4** shows population growth in all of the SCAG counties between 1990 and 2000. Although Los Angeles County had the slowest rate of growth of all of the SCAG counties during that period, it remains by far the most populous.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

In addition to being the most populous county in the SCAG region, Los Angeles County is also the most diverse. The cultural variety of residents in Los Angeles County plays a significant role in defining the character of the unincorporated communities. Influenced by migratory patterns, the roughly ten million residents of the County comprise one of the most diverse regions in the United States.

The Demographic Research Unit of the California Department of Finance estimates that by the year 2050, the Hispanic and Asian populations will account for more than 80% of the residents in the County. Any effort to guide future planning endeavors must recognize and respect the diversity and social values that accompany these demographic shifts. **Table 2.5** shows the racial and ethnic make-up of the unincorporated County population.

IV. PROJECTIONS

This section of the General Plan provides projections that estimate future demographic and economic conditions based upon a variety of informed assumptions and scenarios. Projections play a critical role in the planning process and are tools that can help guide future development patterns in the County. The growth projections contained in this Chapter are based on the best information the County is able to obtain, provides a picture of probable occurrences rather than assured outcomes, and whose accuracy is independent of unforeseen future events.

This section focuses on population, housing, and employment projections that are based on the SCAG 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). As the designated Southern California Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO),



LA County's Next Generation

Table 2.6: Unincorporated L.A. County Population Projections

Subregion	2005	2030	Number Change	Percent Change
Arroyo Verdugo	20,395	23,443	3,048	15.0%
City of Los Angeles	57,235	64,837	7,602	13.3%
Gateway Cities	342,956	382,816	39,860	11.6%
Las Virgenes	21,341	30,529	9,188	43.1%
North L.A. County	132,797	389,595	256,798	193.4%
San Gabriel Valley	364,836	500,358	135,522	37.1%
South Bay Cities	117,449	131,191	13,742	12.4%
Westside Cities	29,068	39,214	10,146	34.9%
Totals	1,086,077	1,561,983	475,906	44.0%

Source: 2008 SCAG RTP Projections.

Population Projections

Table 2.6 shows the unincorporated County's population projections based on SCAG's forecasts for 2030.

SCAG projects that unincorporated Los Angeles County's population will continue to grow, resulting in a 44% increase in population by the year 2030. The rate of population growth will vary greatly among each subregion. For example, the North Los Angeles County subregion, which includes both the Santa Clarita Valley and Antelope Valley unincorporated areas, is expected to grow by

SCAG is mandated by the federal government to research and draw up plans for transportation, growth management, hazardous waste management, and air quality issues.

approximately 250,000 people (193.4%) by the year 2030. In contrast, the urban South Bay Cities subregion is projected to have a relatively lower population change of 12.4% over

As part of the methodology for the 2008 RTP projections, SCAG requested local jurisdictions to provide feedback on their community statistics in order to improve the accuracy of SCAG's projections. The Department of Regional Planning conducted a systematic review of unincorporated areas to account for unique land use characteristics, including availability of vacant and underutilized land, land suitability, transportation networks, and redevelopment potential.

SCAG Subregions

In this section, projections are organized according to SCAG's eight subregions, which collectively encompass all of the County's unincorporated areas. The subregions, shown in Figure 2.4, include:

- Arroyo Verdugo;
- City of Los Angeles;
- Gateway Cities;
- Las Virgenes;
- North Los Angeles County;
- San Gabriel Valley;
- South Bay Cities; and,
- Westside Cities.

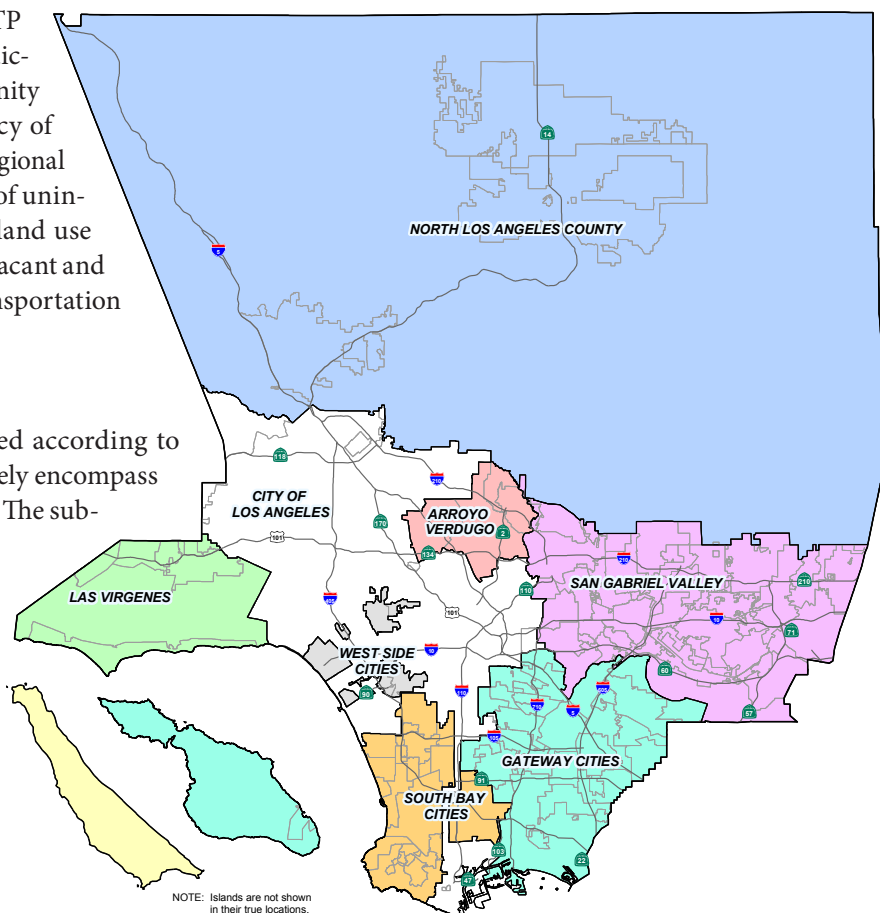


Figure 2.4: L.A. County Subregions as Designated by SCAG

Table 2.7: Unincorporated L.A. County Household Projections

Subregion	2000	2030	Number Change	Percent Change
Arroyo Verdugo	7,304	8,343	1,039	14.2%
City of Los Angeles	13,685	15,445	1,760	12.9%
Gateway Cities	82,041	99,353	17,312	21.1%
Las Virgenes	7,105	9,872	2,767	38.9%
North L.A. County	39,331	119,114	79,783	202.9%
San Gabriel Valley	99,301	138,128	38,827	39.1%
South Bay Cities	32,775	36,802	4,027	12.3%
Westside Cities	13,246	16,357	3,111	23.5%
Totals	294,788	443,414	148,626	50.4%

Source: 2008 SCAG RTP Projections.

the same period. These trends are important to identify so that County agencies can better prepare for future development, guide development toward more suitable areas, focus services where most needed, and address issues related to overcrowding, housing shortages, and recreational needs.

Household Projections

Household estimates are an important indicator of the growing demand for all types of housing in the County. **Table 2.7** displays the projected number of households for the unincorporated County subregions based on SCAG's projections for 2030.

SCAG's household projections indicate a net increase of 148,626 households by the year 2030. The General Plan promotes accommodating these additional households through increasing density in appropriate areas to compensate for the County's dwindling supply of developable land, and to protect its remaining farmland, natural resources, and open spaces. The justification for several policies in the General Plan, such as supporting transit-oriented development and providing density bonuses for affordable housing development, are based on these projected increases in the number of new households. The Housing Element provides a comprehensive analysis of the unincorporated County's housing needs and future plans for housing-

related planning activities. The 2008 Housing Element can be found at <http://planning.lacounty.gov/housing>

Employment Projections

Los Angeles County is situated at the center of a highly developed and diversified industrial-based economy. Major features of the economy include: one of the world's largest concentrations of high technology industry supported by many advanced research and educational institutions; a high proportion of employment concentrated in services, trades and professions; and the world's fifth busiest seaport (the

combination of the adjacent Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach). Historically, the County's economic base has adapted to rapid innovation and change, and has placed an emphasis on education and research as economic activities.

The economy and regional job market of Los Angeles County is large and increasingly diversified. The economic base of the Southern California region consists of professional services, diversified manufacturing activities, transportation and wholesale trade, tourism and entertainment, and defense-related and resource-based industries. In addition to strong manufacturing, services and trade sectors, the County has developed into a center of international business and finance. The Economic Development Element of the General Plan provides a detailed discussion of the County's economy and the land use issues related

“Fast-forward to 2030. Imagine a Los Angeles County with almost three million residents over age 60, up from 1.4 million today. One in every four neighbors will be older. What will be their quality of life? What services must we as a society provide now to assist and support them? As Los Angeles County's population ages, pressure builds to assure the right local services exist to preserve older residents' healthy independence and to mitigate potential problems as they age.

*-L.A. County Seniors Count!
County of Los Angeles, Community and Senior Services*

to economic development. **Table 2.8** shows employment projections for unincorporated Los Angeles County based on SCAG forecasts.

The largest growth in jobs is expected to be in the North L.A. County sub-region (125.0%), the same area that is expected to see the most population growth and housing construction. The General Plan considers these trends important, and the data shapes County goals and policies that promote healthy and sustainable communities that provide a high quality of life for County residents and businesses.

Table 2.8: Unincorporated L.A. County Employment Projections

Subregion	2000	2030	Number Change	Percent Change
Arroyo Verdugo	3,844	4,082	238	6.2%
City of Los Angeles	24,820	26,785	1,965	7.9%
Gateway Cities	83,435	93,006	9,571	11.5%
Las Virgenes	16,277	17,854	1,577	9.7%
North L.A. County	34,592	77,831	43,239	125.0%
San Gabriel Valley	98,834	112,084	13,250	13.4%
South Bay Cities	20,346	21,767	1,421	7.0%
Westside Cities	17,637	18,459	822	4.7%
Totals	299,785	371,868	72,083	24.0%

Source: 2008 SCAG RTP Projections

V. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Using the data compiled from the demographic analysis of the unincorporated County areas, several planning assumptions were formulated to aid the development of the goals, policies, and implementation programs contained in the General Plan Elements. The following planning assumptions have been organized by the three areas of demographic analysis (population, housing, and employment), and one section for the environment.

Population

- There will be continued population growth county-wide with a disproportionate amount of growth being concentrated in the North County.
- The County will continue to see a complex pattern of migration and immigration that will present cultural and age-specific planning opportunities and constraints.
- The Hispanic composition of the population will continue to increase.
- Development to accommodate population growth will continue to mount pressures to convert open space areas into non-open space uses.
- The need to balance population growth with environmental concerns will be increasingly important in planning actions.

- Specific incentives and land use strategies must guide development toward infill areas, existing urban infrastructure, and along public transit corridors in accordance with SCAG's Compass Blueprint 2% Strategy.

Housing

- Housing demand, especially for affordable housing, will remain high.
- Affordable housing in the County will include low income housing, low-median income housing, and workforce housing.
- Consistent housing construction will be needed to keep pace with the County's expected rate of population growth.
- Development activities will be most aggressive in the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley areas.
- There will be a continued decrease in land available for new housing throughout the County coupled with a continued increase in pressure to preserve open space and agricultural land.
- Higher density housing is needed to balance shortages of land for development and the increasing needs for housing and commerce.

Employment

- Los Angeles County will continue to be a major regional economic center.
- Existing employment trends are likely to continue.
- The region will continue to lose manufacturing jobs while seeing an increase in jobs related to professional and business services and trade.

- The County will need to promote and maintain a diversified economy in order ensure a healthy and sustainable economic future.
- The County will need to better train its workforce in order to be prepared for future job growth and changes in the economy.
- Commercial and industrial activities will continually need to be refined, improved, and balanced with residential sectors.
- Infrastructure and commerce needs will continue to be important to the County and will require the attention of various County agencies and officials.
- Communities throughout unincorporated Los Angeles County face unique and diverse economic conditions and challenges.
- Development pressure to convert industrial lands to other uses will continue.
- The amount of trading and cargo activity at the Ports will continue to grow, causing increased impacts on the regions environment and transportation system.
- The challenge as to how to balance growth and the environment will be increasingly important in planning decisions.
- Existing parks will be burdened by a lack of neighborhood parks and open space to serve a growing population.
- Environmental conditions and environmental regulations will continue the pressure to introduce and utilize new technologies and green techniques, such as green-building, low impact development and alternative energy sources.
- Attention to water supply, water quality regulations and climate conditions will be critical planning issues related to global warming.
- Global warming, air quality concerns, and federal and state legislation will affect land use and transportation policies in the County.

Environment

- The County will continue to see environmental issues arising from growth, transportation, and economic activities.
- Development will continue to mount pressures to convert open space areas into non-open space uses.



Development at the Urban Fringe